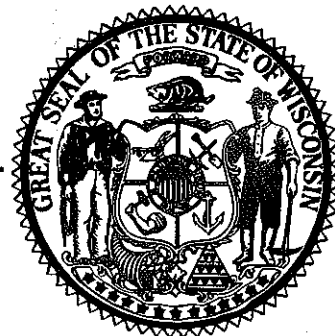


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President Wisconsin State Senate



Public Hearing on Senate Bill 16
Senate Committee on Public Health, Senior Issues,
Long-Term Care and Job Creation
February 9, 2009

History: A constituent contacted the office in 2005 because a neighbor of hers was asked to leave a local mall for breastfeeding her child in a public seating area. The constituent asked if there was a state law to prohibit discrimination against breastfeeding mothers. Upon further review, I found that the only provision in state law that addressed breastfeeding was to exempt it from the definition of "lewd behavior".

The Bill: Senate Bill 16 will allow a mother to breastfeed in any public or private location where she is otherwise authorized to be. Additionally, this bill would prohibit any person from interfering with the right of a mother to breast feed her child. Any person who interferes with this right would be subject to a forfeiture of not more than \$200.

Currently, 40 states have laws which allow mothers to breastfeed in any public or private place.

Why is this bill necessary?

This bill is necessary to eliminate societal barriers to breastfeeding. With all of the public health benefits of breastfeeding—for both mother and child—we need to set aside our societal notions of modesty and focus on the real issue.

Many people claim that they are uncomfortable with seeing a woman nurse her child, that it is unacceptable in public. This is understandable, however the definition of what is and is not acceptable in public is completely subjective. One person may disapprove of another's appearance—for example, older adults disapproving of the fashions of the younger generation. This does not mean that we should keep the younger generation out of sight.

An FDA study of why women do not breastfeed—or stop after a short time—found that a principal factor is embarrassment by mothers because of the reaction caused by public nursing.

According to the CDC, in 2005 breastfeeding rates for infants in the US were as follows:

- 74.2% of children were breastfed at some point.
- 43% of women were still breastfeeding their infants at 6 months
- 21.4% of women were still breastfeeding at 1 year

According to the Surgeon Generals Healthy People 2010 Goals

- 75% of women should be breastfeeding after delivery
- 50% of women should continue to breastfeed through 6 months
- 25% of women should continue breastfeeding through 1 year

Obstacles to initiation and continuation of breastfeeding include:

- Lack of family and broad societal support
- Inappropriate interruption of breastfeeding
- Insufficient prenatal education
- Disruptive hospital policies and practices
- Early hospital discharge in some cases
- Lack of timely follow up care
- Misinformation

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding of infants for six months, and continuation of breastfeeding after solid foods are introduced. It is estimated that Americans would save \$3.6 Billion annually in health care costs because breastfed babies tend to be healthier babies.

Passage of Senate Bill 16 will have a two fold effect: first, to ensure that mothers can feed their children without fear of harassment; and second to ensure that our children are offered the healthiest start possible in life. I would encourage the committee to act favorably on this proposal in the interest of mothers and babies throughout Wisconsin.